

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, PN
SUBJECT: TORRIJOS SPEAKS ON TREATY, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

SUMMARY: IN AN APRIL 1 SPEECH TO A JOURNALISTS' CONVENTION, TORRIJOS REPEATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT YET EITHER CONDEMN OR APPLAUD SENATE ACTIONS ON THE NEUTRALITY TREATY. HE CALLED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL CONSENSUS ON WHAT THE NATION SHOULD RESPOND. HE SPOKE ALSO OF CONSIDERING A SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION IN THE POWERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES (NACR), POSSIBLY INCLUDING IT IN THE PROCESS OF LEGISLATING, AND/OR OF APPROVAL BY IT OF APPOINTMENTS TO HEAD AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. DESPITE EARLIER REPORTS THAT HE WOULD NOT ATTEND, EN. TORRIJOS ADDRESSED THE OPENING SESSION OF A NATIONAL JOURNALISTS' CONVENTION IN SANTIAGO, VERAGUAS APRIL 1. HIS SPEECH (FULL TEXT FBIS/PANAMA PA 020340Y) WAS BROADCAST ON RADIO AND TAPED FOR TELEVISION, AND SUBSTANTIAL EXCERPTS WERE PRINTED IN APRIL 2 AND 3 PAPERS.

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2. TORRIJOS REPEATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL NOT "CONDEMN OR APPLAUD WHAT IS GOING ON RIGHT NOW UNTIL THEY RETURN TO US THE TREATY THAT WE FORWARDED." THEN "THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONSULT THE VIEWS OF THIS PEOPLE AND WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THOSE VIEWS WE WILL DECIDE ON THE ANSWERS AND THE WAY TO RESPOND TO WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAS SENT BACK."

3. HE CALLED ON EVERYONE, INCLUDING HIMSELF, TO THINK RATHER THAN FEEL, AND TO AVOID NARROW INTERPRETATIONS BASED ON SPECIAL INTERESTS. INSTEAD, HE SAID, PANAMANIAN SHOULD DECIDE WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH THE FINAL TREATY PACKAGE ON THE BASIS OF WHAT IS GOOD FOR THE COUNTRY. HE DISMISSED THE IDEA THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT A TREATY WHICH THE PEOPLE WOULD NOT, BECAUSE "WE WOULD NOT STAY IN POWER A SINGLE MINUTE AFTER SUCH A SELL-OUT PLAN OR IDEA CAME TO LIGHT."

4. TORRIJOS ALSO REAFFIRMED THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS FOR THE NACR. HE PRONOUNCED HIMSELF PROUD OF THE NACR'S DEVELOPMENT AS AN ORGAN OF DIRECT CONSULTATION WITH THE PEOPLE AND AS HIS REVOLUTION'S EXPRESSION OF THE POPULAR WILL. NOTING ADVERSE COMMENTS ABOUT ITS LACK OF POWER, HOWEVER, HE SAID THE REVOLUTION MIGHT NOW REQUIRE "REALIGNMENT" OF THE GOVERNMENT'S STRUCTURE TO ENHANCE THE NACR'S ROLE. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE NINE NACR VICE-PRESIDENTS (ELECTED BY RESPECTIVE PROVINCIAL DELEGATIONS) MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LEGISLATION (THE BODY WHICH ACTUALLY MAKES LAWS UNDER THE 1972 CONSTITUTION). IF THIS PROVED INSUFFICIENT, HE SAID, THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP OF THE NACR MIGHT BE INCORPORATED INTO THE COUNCIL. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY BEING CONSIDERED WAS TO GIVE THE NACR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE APPOINTMENTS TO HEAD AUTONOMOUS AGENCIES OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE GOVERNMENT.

5. TORRIJOS DISCLAIMED ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ANY INTENT TO MISUSE THE POWERS GRANTED TO THE GUARD UNDER ARTICLE 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION. HOWEVER, HE SAID, THE GUARD WOULD NOT COUNTENANCE A RETURN TO ITS FORMER SITUATION IN WHICH IT WAS INVOLVED IN GOVERNMENT ONLY TO REPRESS THE PEOPLE.

6. COMMENT: CONSIDERING THE WAVE OF ANGER WHICH THE SENATE RESERVATIONS, MAINLY DECONCINI, HAVE SET OFF, TORRIJOS' REMARKS ABOUT THE TREATY STRIKE US AS RESERVED IN TONE. IT STILL MEANS WAIT AND SEE. HIS SUGGESTION OF EXPANSION OF NACR POWERS IS A TENTATIVE PROPOSAL, PUT FORWARD OMAR-FASHION IN AN EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECH. IT MAY BEAR FRUIT; IT MAY NOT. TORRIJOS HAS LONG SEEN THE NACR AS HIS AMORPHOUS "REVOLUTION'S" ANSWER TO THE URGAN-ORIENTED PARTY-DOMINATED GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAST, AND AS ITS STRUCTURAL WAY TO PERPETUATE THE POLITICAL EMASCULATION OF THE FORMERLY-DOMINANT ELITE. HIS REMARKS INDICATE THAT HE IS RECEPTIVE TO THE IDEA OF SOME EXPANSION OF THE NACR'S ROLE. WHETHER THAT RATHER UNSOPHISTICATED

AGGRETATION OF LOCAL NOTABLES CAN LIVE UP TO HIS
EXPECTATIONS REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
JORDEN

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